

5590 Long Island Dr NW  
Atlanta, GA 30327  
September 23, 2015

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley  
Office of the Governor  
1205 Pendleton Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Governor Haley,

We are writing to request your assistance in getting Dr. Benjamin E. Mays awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. As you are aware, Dr. Mays, born in Greenwood County, is one of South Carolina's most distinguished sons. His portrait hangs in the S.C. Statehouse. Following Mary McCloud Bethune, he was the second African-American to have this honor bestowed upon him by the State of S.C.

By way of background, Dr. Mays was unanimously nominated by Sense of the House of Representatives Resolution No. 17 on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1983 (Enclosure 1). However, when President Reagan's list of medal recipients was announced in early March 1984, Dr. Mays, to everyone's surprise, was not on the list. He died on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1984 without knowledge of this honor.

On November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2001, during the presidency of George W. Bush, Dr. Mays was unanimously nominated by Sense of the Senate Resolution No. 23 (Enclosure 2). Again, probably because of partisan politics, Dr. Mays was not awarded the medal.

Dr. Benjamin E. Mays was a monumental figure of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Assuming the presidency of Morehouse College in Atlanta at its lowest point in 1940 following the Great Depression, Dr. Mays struggled and by sheer determination through the course of 27 years, built Morehouse into a world-class institution by the time of his retirement in 1967. It was during this period that he became a legendary figure as the mentor/advisor/eulogist for Martin Luther King, Jr; as a presidential advisor to Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter; and as a peerless, forceful orator traveling and speaking against segregation and racial discrimination. He has been credited as the "Father of the Civil Rights Movement." In 1969, he won a seat on the Atlanta School Board and was then elected and served as its president from 1970-1981, retiring just three years before his death on March 28, 1984.

Today, the Benjamin E. Mays Historical Preservation Site in Greenwood, dedicated in April 2011, with the keynote address by Ambassador Andrew Young, serves as the catalyst for perpetuating Dr. Mays' mighty legacy. Since Dr. Mays was a national and international figure, people visit the site from all parts of the U.S. The site has been a boon for Greenwood County. In addition, Dr. Mays has been honored in many other ways, such as having schools, roads/highways (to include a portion of US-178 in Greenwood County), libraries and other entities named for him. But, as you are aware, the Presidential Medal of Freedom is the highest civilian award that can be given to a U.S. citizen.

There is no one more deserving of the Presidential Medal of Freedom than one of South Carolina's most distinguished and notable citizens, Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays. His posthumous receipt of the medal will result in tremendous elation and joy for members of his family, the City/County of Greenwood, and

the State of South Carolina. We urge you, as the recently demonstrated leader of the New South, to do whatever is necessary to ensure that Dr. Mays' legacy is honored in this way and, by doing so, the State of South Carolina will demonstrate once again to the world that the State is about doing what is just and honorable and remains committed to righting past wrongs.

Sincerely,

*Marshalyn Yeargin-Allsopp*  
Marshalyn Yeargin-Allsopp, MD  
Great Niece – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Atlanta, Georgia  
(404-395-8048)

*Bernice Mays Perkins*  
Mrs. Bernice Mays Perkins  
Niece  
Cleveland, Ohio

*Rev. Dwight Powell*  
Rev. Dwight Powell  
Great Nephew – Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.

*Loy E. Sartin*  
Loy E. Sartin, Curator  
Benjamin E. Mays Historical Preservation Site  
Greenwood, South Carolina

98TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

## H. RES. 17

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the President should award Benjamin Elijah Mays the Presidential Medal of Freedom in honor of his distinguished career as an educator, civil rights leader, and theologian.

### IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 3, 1983

Mr. DIXON (for himself, Mr. FOWLER, Mr. SIMON, Mr. BARNARD, Mr. CLAY, Mr. CROCKETT, Mr. GINGRICH, Mr. GRAY, Mr. HATCHER, Mr. MITCHELL, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. SAVAGE, and Mr. STOKES) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service

OCTOBER 6, 1983

Additional sponsors: Mr. LELAND, Mr. FAUNTROY, Mr. FORD of Tennessee, Mr. DELLUMS, Mr. WHEAT, Mr. DYMALLY, Mr. TOWNS, Mr. WASHINGTON, Mr. LEVITAS, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. RAY, Mr. THOMAS of Georgia, Mr. ROWLAND, Mr. DE LUZO, Mr. SUNIA, Mr. HORTON, Mr. BARNES, Mr. EDGAR, Mr. RATCHFORD, Mr. TALLON, Mr. McHUGH, Mr. BURTON of California, Mr. LEWIS of California, Mr. WILSON, Mr. FROST, Mr. FORSYTHE, Mr. LEHMAN of Florida, Mr. KAPTUR, Mr. EVANS of Illinois, Mr. BATES, Mr. MIKULSKI, Mr. HOYER, Mr. JENKINS, Mr. WEISS, Mr. DOWNNEY of New York, Mr. DREBICK, Mr. HAWKINS, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. SPRATT, Mr. YATES, Mrs. COLLINS, Mr. LEVINE of California, Mr. ANDREWS of Texas, Mr. BERMAN, Mr. BROWN of California, Mr. DAUB, Mr. FABIO, Mrs. HALL of Indiana, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. LEVIN of Michigan, Mr. RICHARDSON, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. FOGLIETTA, Mr. MILLER of California, Mr. BOB, Mr. OWENS, Mr. PERKINS, Mr. ADDARIO, Mr. COUGHLIN, Mr. FEIGAN, Mr. FORD of Michigan, Mr. FRANK, Mr. GARCIA, Mr. GORE, Mr. GUARINI, Mr. HYDE, Mr. LIVINGSTON, Mr. LONG of Maryland, Mr. MARTINES, Mr. MATSUI, Mr. MINETA, Mr. MOODY, Mr. PANETTA, Mr. PETRI, Mr. ROSE, Mr. ROYAL, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. SOLARE, Mr. WIRTH, Mr. WOLFE, Mr. ANDERSON, Mr. BRILLINSON, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. GEEKS, Mr. HEFTTEL of Hawaii, Mr. KARICH, Mr. LEHMAN of California, Mr. LONG of Louisiana, Mr. LOWEY of Washington, Mr. MOAKLEY, Mr. MRASEK, Mr. ORNSTEIN, Mr. PATTERSON, Mr. PEPPER, Mr. STANGERLAND, Mr. TOWNS, Mr. VANDER JAGT, Mr. VENTO, Mr. WHITEHURST, Mr. WILLIAMS of Montana, Mr. FREERAO, Mr. FRENDEL, Mr. LAGOMARSINO, Ms. OAKAR, Mr. PICKLE, Mr. RODINO, Mr. HOFNER, Mr. ADKINS, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. DWYER of New Jersey, Mr. GIBSON, Mr. GREEN, Mr. HANCO, Mr. KOST-

MAYER, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. VALENTINE, Mr. NATCHER, Mr. BEVILL, Mr. CHANDLER, Mr. HALL of Ohio, Mr. NEAL, Mr. EDWARDS of California, Mr. KEMP, Mr. SLATTERY, Mr. TORRICELLI, Mr. BRYANT, Mr. CHAPPIN, Mr. CLARKE, Mr. COYNE, Mr. DASCHLE, Mrs. KENNELLY, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. PRITCHARD, Mr. SIRISKY, Mr. YATSON, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mr. ASPIN, Mr. BRIDELL, Mr. BONKER, Mr. BONIOS of Michigan, Mr. COLEMAN of Missouri, Mr. D'AMOURS, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. FISH, Mr. GONZALES, Mr. JACOBS, Mr. PORTER, Mr. SHANNON, Mr. SMITH of Florida, Mr. STARK, Mr. SWIFT, Mr. UDALL, Mr. WALGREEN, Mr. WINN, Mr. WIEN, Mr. WON PAT, Mr. COOPER, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. HUGHES, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. STUDDS, Mr. BARTLETT, Mr. BORSKI, Mr. CARE, Mr. FARCELL, Mr. LEACH of Iowa, Mr. LIPINSKI, Mr. MAVROULES, Mr. McNULTY, Mr. MORRISON of Connecticut, Mr. WEAVER, Mr. VANDERGRIFF, Mr. YOUNG of Missouri, Mr. ANDREWS of North Carolina, Mr. BRITT, Mr. BOSCO, Mr. FUQUA, Mr. JONES of North Carolina, Mr. PEASE, Mr. ANTHONY, Mr. CAMPBELL, Mr. CONABLE, Mr. DOEGAN, Mr. EDWARDS of Alabama, Mr. FLIPPO, Mr. GRADISON, Mr. OLIN, Mr. RONTENKOWSKI, Mr. AKAKA, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. BATHMAN, Mr. BIAGGI, Mr. BOWEN of Tennessee, Mr. COELHO, Mr. DYSON, Mr. EDWARDS of Oklahoma, Mr. GEDENSON, Mr. HANSEN of Utah, Mr. JONES of Oklahoma, Mr. KILDER, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. McCURDY, Mr. OTTINGER, Mr. PENNY, Mr. RITTER, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. EARLY, and Mr. SKELTON

OCTOBER 6, 1983

Committee on Post Office and Civil Service discharged; considered and agreed to

## RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the President should award Benjamin Elijah Mays the Presidential Medal of Freedom in honor of his distinguished career as an educator, civil rights leader, and theologian.

Whereas Benjamin Elijah Mays, throughout his distinguished career of more than half a century as an educator, civil rights leader, and theologian, has inspired people of all races throughout the world by his persistent commitment to excellence;

Whereas Benjamin Mays persevered, despite the frustrations inherent in segregation, to begin an illustrious career in education;

Whereas, as head of the School of Religion of Howard University and later as President of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, for twenty-seven years, Benjamin Mays overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles to offer quality education to all Americans, especially black Americans;

Whereas, at the commencement of World War II, when most colleges suffered from a lack of available students and the demise of Morehouse College appeared imminent, Benjamin Mays prevented the college from permanently closing its doors by vigorously recruiting potential students and thereby aiding in the development of future generations of black leaders;

Whereas Benjamin Mays was instrumental in the elimination of segregated public facilities in Atlanta, Georgia, and promoted the cause of nonviolence through peaceful student protests during a time in this Nation that was often marred by racial violence;

Whereas Benjamin Mays has been the recipient of numerous accolades throughout his career, including fifty-three honorary degrees from universities across the Nation and the naming of a school and a street in his honor; and

Whereas the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the Nation, was established in 1945 to appropriately recognize Americans who have made an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, or cultural or other significant public or private endeavors: Now, therefore, be it

- 1        *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Repre-
- 2        sentatives that the President should award Benjamin Elijah
- 3        Mays the Presidential Medal of Freedom in honor of his dis-
- 4        tinguished career as an educator, civil rights leader, and

1 theologian and his many contributions to the improvement of  
2 American society.

3       Sec. 2. The Clerk of the House of Representatives shall  
4 transmit a copy of this resolution to Benjamin Elijah Mays.

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**November 30,  
2001**

107th Congress, 1st Session  
Issue: Vol. 147, No. 164 — Daily  
Edition

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## EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE IN AWARDING THE PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF FREEDOM (Senate - November 30, 2001)

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EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE IN AWARDING THE PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL  
OF FREEDOM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 217, S. Res. 23.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 23) expressing the sense of the Senate that the President should award the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously to Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays in honor of his distinguished career as an educator, civil and human rights leader, and public theologian.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the resolution and preamble be agreed to en bloc, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating thereto be printed in the Record.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 23) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. Res. 23

Whereas Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, throughout his distinguished career of more than half a century as an educator, civil and human rights leader, and public theologian, has inspired people of all races throughout the world by his persistent commitment to excellence;

Whereas Benjamin Mays persevered, despite the frustrations inherent in segregation, to begin an illustrious career in education;

Whereas as dean of the School of Religion of Howard University and later as President of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, for 27 years, Benjamin Mays overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles to offer quality education to all Americans, especially African Americans;

Whereas at the commencement of World War II, when most



colleges suffered from a lack of available students and the demise of Morehouse College appeared imminent, Benjamin Mays prevented the college from permanently closing its doors by vigorously recruiting potential students and thereby aiding in the development of future generations of African American leaders;

Whereas Benjamin Mays was instrumental in the elimination of segregated public facilities in Atlanta, Georgia, and promoted the cause of nonviolence through peaceful student protests during a time in this Nation that was often marred by racial violence;

Whereas Benjamin Mays received numerous accolades throughout his career, including 56 honorary degrees from universities across the United States and abroad and the naming of 7 schools and academic buildings and a street in his honor; and

Whereas the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the Nation, was established in 1945 to appropriately recognize Americans who have made an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, or cultural or other significant public or private endeavors: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that the President should award the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously to Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays in honor of his distinguished career as an educator, civil and human rights leader, and public theologian and his many contributions to the improvement of American society and the world.

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[◀ All articles in Senate section](#)

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The living room in Dr. Mays' birth home.



Mays' parents' bedroom. There is a closet and fireplace in this room. There were only two bedrooms for Mays' family of ten.



Inside the Museum.

Inside the Burns Springs School. It contains old, primitive school desks, wood stove, and blackboards with assignments for upper and lower grades.



During the summer, the garden contains corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, cantaloupes, watermelons, okra, speckled butterbeans, and squash.



Washing pot, rinsing tubs, chopping blocks and cotton field are representative of the Mays' sharecropper farm circa 1900.



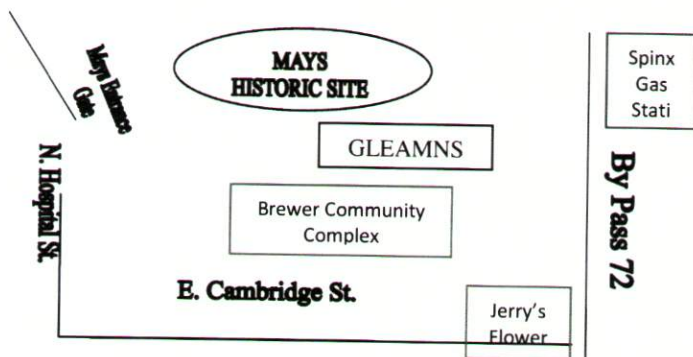
An original outhouse and cedar post clothesline add authenticity to the site.





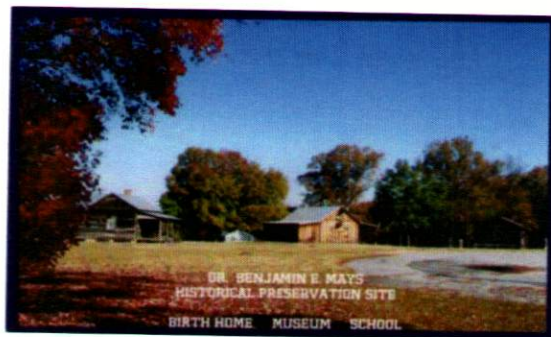
*Change in the Wind*, a 2010 documentary of Dr. Mays' life, produced by Andrew Young (former Mayor of Atlanta and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations), played in Greenwood several times. South Carolina ETV produced a film called *Born to Rebel, Driven to Excel* in September 2012.

Although Dr. Mays died in 1984, his immortal spirit lives in many places especially at Morehouse College and in the place of his birth, Greenwood, South Carolina. This marker stands near the field in Epworth where his home stood for over 100 years before it was relocated to the Historic Site.



Tours by appointment: (864) 223-8434; ext. 1001  
Address: 229 N. Hospital Street, Greenwood, SC 29646  
Website: [www.mayshousemuseum.org](http://www.mayshousemuseum.org)

## Dr. Benjamin E. Mays Historical Preservation Site



Dr. Mays was born in this home on August 1, 1894 in the Epworth Community of Greenwood County (SC). The home was moved to the Historical Site in 2004.



This faux barn serves as the Interpretive Center/Museum. Photos, books, brochures, speeches, films and some personal items belonging to Dr. Mays are here. The HDTV Theatre seats sixty.



The original Burns Springs African-American School was moved to the site from the Epworth area.